

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 938. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1886.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

A DATELESS BARGAIN.

By C. L. PIRKIS,

Author of "Lady Lovelace," etc.

CHAPTER XXXII.

JOYCE had not Mab's aptitude for slipping into unconsciousness whenever affairs neared a climax, and a tumult threatened. Only a white, haggard face told the tale of the storm she had just passed through, as, quaking and tottering, she made her way back to Mab's side.

Mab had been restored to consciousness, but still lay, with closed eyes, on her couch.

Joyce dismissed the maids, and took their place beside the sofa. Mab's eyes opened instantly.

"Is he gone, Joyce?" she whispered nervously.

When Joyce, making a gigantic effort, gave in reply a calm "Yes, darling," there came a long, weary sigh of relief and another question, this put a little eagerly:

"He won't come back again, will he?"

Joyce was all unprepared for this question. "No, darling, he won't come back again," she answered boldly enough; but her heart gave the lie to her words as she spoke them. It said with no uncertain conviction, "He will come back again, and again, and again; he will test his strength against your weakness day after day, day after day, till how it will all end, Heaven only knows."

"I don't want to see him, Joyce," Mab went on presently. "I don't think I could say 'No' to him, if he really begged for a 'Yes.' But I feel 'No' is the only word I ought to say." She ended with another deep sigh, and a pathetic emphasis on the "I."

Joyce felt she must get to the bottom of this hideous mystery, no matter at what cost. "Tell me, dear," she asked gently, "how is it you have learnt to—to—like this man in the way you do?"

Mab for one instant lifted her eyes to Joyce's face. They showed deep and shining as Joyce had never before seen them. "Oh, Joyce," she said, in a low, impassioned voice, "if one walked into the room this very minute, bringing you glad news of Frank, how would you feel towards him?"

"I—oh, I should fall down and worship him! I would lay down my life for him, inch by inch, as he wanted it—I can't say more."

"Ah, you will understand, then. Well, listen! Captain Buckingham came to me bringing me glad news, the gladdest news in the world. He made me see how that I, who had been all my life long fighting against one half of myself, thinking it was the base, bad half, had in reality been fighting against the best, noblest part of my nature. He taught me it was my duty to loose it—let it go free, so that I might live here a life beside which an angel's might show clouded and dim."

Joyce's bewildered brain made vain efforts to solve what seemed to her a string of enigmas. "Go on, dear; how did you set about it?" she asked, hoping the question might bring a ray of light in its answer.

"I studied deeply books of all sorts on clairvoyance and trance vision. I acquired the habit of self-mesmerism. I learnt the art of throwing one's self into a trance—at will."

Joyce started. Here stood the mystery of Mab's life explained.

"Go on, dear," she contrived to say calmly enough, but all the time fearing

that the revelations of this terrible morning were never coming to an end.

"I learnt to know who, what, the 'I' of existence is. How that it is not the soul, not the body, but by dint of habit, by practice, by strong exercise of will, can reside in either."

"Go on, dear. And then——"

"Oh! the sweet things, the beautiful things, I have learnt to see, Joyce. I know now what 'I was in the spirit' means. If I lived long enough, like Swedenborg, like the prophets of old time, I know I should taste beforehand the glories of the world to come."

"And then, dear——"

"Oh! and then—why, then, darling Joyce, of course I should finally, eternally enter into them—after death, I mean."

"Shan't we all do that, Mab, if we lead true, patient lives here, without any straining after gifts and powers wisely put beyond our reach?"

But the instant she had said the words, she would fain have caught them back. Mab turned her face wearily to the wall with a deep sigh, saying: "I thought you would have understood, Joyce; I wanted so to tell you everything."

"Darling, tell me everything," pleaded Joyce, getting up from her chair and kneeling beside the sofa. "I will listen quietly, oh, so quietly; I won't interrupt you again."

But it was some minutes before Mab spoke again. Then there was something of pain in her tone as she said:

"Joyce, I don't want you to think I have been utterly selfish from beginning to end in the—the gift I have been cultivating."

"You selfish! Oh, my darling!"

"I have thought of all my friends throughout. It seemed to me, if I trained myself to use this gift of seeing—it is nothing else—I might do great things for all my friends."

"Yes, dear, I understand."

"You know how I failed with poor Ned Donovan. Captain Buckingham explained to me how it was I did so fail. The thing haunted me—nearly drove me mad. I felt—I feel all your unhappiness was of my bringing——"

"No, no, no, Mab."

"Yes it was, Joyce. I think the thought would have killed me outright, if Captain Buckingham had not shown me how my gift might be the means of repairing the terrible evil I had wrought."

A flash of lightning, all in a second, will reveal miles of night-hidden landscape. All in a flash Joyce seemed to see the double game Buckingham had played: how he had adapted his bait to his victim, and how desperately fatal it was likely to prove.

She wisely kept her indignation from her tongue, however, knowing how meaningless it would be to Mab's clouded brain.

Mab went on: "So, night and day I shut myself up in my room, with but one thought in my mind, 'Frank, Frank, where is he; where shall I see him?' Oh, Joyce, how your hand trembles! Do I distress you? Shall I leave off?"

"Go on, Mab, quickly; for the love of Heaven tell me what you have seen!" cried Joyce, all vibrating with another feeling now.

"Alas, darling, so far I have seen nothing. And this is strangest of all, for I could fill volumes with the wonders and glories I have seen in the world that seems so commonplace to commonplace eyes, and yet leave the greater part untold."

There came a long, deep-drawn sigh from Joyce, nothing more.

"Yet whenever I close my eyes and say to myself, 'I will go feel after Frank in the wide, wide world,' strange to say an odd noise fills my ears, a sound like the rushing and surging of an ocean. I see nothing but a great grey stretch of sky, a great grey stretch of sea beneath, not a sign of life anywhere. Nothing but desolation all around."

Joyce's face was hidden in her hands now. This vision of desolation seemed in very truth an apt picture of her own empty, aching heart.

Mab tried to speak words of comfort.

"Darling, do not grieve so; I do not believe he is dead. If he were I should have seen him, I know. It would take too long to tell you how I know it—and you wouldn't understand. Oh, and there's one thing, Joyce—one thing has been forced upon me in these long, silent hours! I am sure, I have felt it, I know it; wherever he is, he is true to you. By-and-by people will be trying to make out that Kathleen has had something to do with his disappearance. I have heard them whisper it already. But you'll never believe this, Joyce, will you?" Here she sat up on her couch, and put her arms all round her sister. "And in my long hours of—of vision this thought has come to me always first and last, strong and clear,

"Wherever he is, he is true, he is true, he couldn't be otherwise."

Joyce drew her hands from her white, stricken face, with never a tear on it.

"He couldn't be otherwise," she repeated slowly, and the mournful scorn of her smile as she said it was a thing to remember. "Oh, Mab, has it taken you hours of trance to find out what is simple matter of fact to me, to everyone who ever touched Frank's hand, or looked in his face? My dear, you have made to yourself wings to carry you over a plain, straight road that your feet could have trodden more easily by far. Oh, Mab, take to your feet again, let the wings go. The angels want them, not we!"

Mab sank back again on her couch, answering nothing. Her eyes closed wearily once more. Was it sleep or trance? Joyce asked herself.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THERE is an old legend of a knight whose brave heart was exchanged for that of a hare, and who ever afterwards trembled at, and fled from, the dangers he before had courted. Joyce felt herself in much such a plight now.

Her terrible interview with Captain Buckingham had left her with but one thought paramount—a longing for instant flight. In it alone she felt lay Mab's safety, her own only chance of a successful resistance to an appalling temptation.

She dared not risk another interview with the man. In her last she had expended all her resources, had drawn upon her utmost reserves. Were they to meet again, she knew she must lie weaponless at his mercy.

She at once consulted the doctor, who had been hurriedly called in to attend Mab in her fainting-fit, as to the expediency of immediate change of air and scene for his patient. The doctor pronounced a decidedly favourable opinion on the matter.

"Nothing could be better for her," he said. "Her nerves were, so to speak, unstrung, her system generally lacked tone. For this condition there was no better tonic to be found than bracing sea-air."

Then there was Mab to consult, and here Joyce's heart misgave her sorely, lest Mab, following the dictates of one of her unaccountable impulses, should steadily refuse to be dislodged from her present quarters.

Her misgivings, however, were not

verified, for Mab gave the heartiest welcome to the project.

"The very thing, Joyce!" she cried excitedly. "Oh, I can't tell you how often lately I have longed to get to the sea. I feel——" but here she checked herself abruptly.

"But, dear, why did you not say so, it could so easily have been managed?" queried Joyce astonished.

"If only we knew where to go!" Mab went on with a sigh, a curious wistful expression passing over her face.

"How would you like a quiet little village in Switzerland among the hills and lakes?" asked Joyce, eager to put first the ocean, then the Alps, between Buckingham and herself.

Mab shook her head.

"I don't think the place I want to go to is in Switzerland."

Then she drifted into apologies and explanations.

"It's just this, Joyce: the sea haunts me night and day. How can I make you understand? There is for ever in my ears the rush and roar of a mighty ocean, and when I close my eyes and you think I am sleeping, I see nothing but big brown rocks, steep and bare, and a grand sweep of murky, dashing sea."

Joyce gave a great start. Mab's visions after all might be something other than the picture-parables of mystic truths which she had deemed them. What if they were to throw a clearer light on the miserable darkness than any that their vast expenditure of time, thought, money, had been able to throw?

"Oh, Mab, darling, can you not give the place a name?" she asked breathlessly.

Again Mab shook her head.

"When I was a child," she said, "and went with Uncle Archie across Scotland, I remember spending a day in much such a place. I think it was in Ayrshire, on the coast looking across the North Channel. I would like to go there first, Joyce, if you didn't mind, although it isn't quite the place I see in my—my dreams."

So their preparations for flight were at once begun, Joyce urging them forward with an eagerness which told tales of her failing courage.

In spite of her haste, however, she did not forget to take every precaution to keep their destination a secret. Two days after Buckingham's visit to the house saw them ensconced in an hotel in Carlisle. Here

Joyce took the opportunity of dismissing their London maids and engaging others, thereby cutting off all communication with the London household. From Carlisle they went direct to Newton Stewart, the little town where, in the old days, Mab had stayed with Uncle Archie.

Here they heard of a little sea-side place which seemed in every respect to fulfil Mab's descriptions. Tretwick-by-Sea it was called. Joyce found she could engage a small furnished cottage there for herself and Mab. Other accommodation for visitors there was none.

This little cottage had been built by a wealthy inhabitant of Dumfries, as a last hope of saving the life of an invalid son. The hope had proved futile, and, since the death of the lad, the little house had remained unoccupied. It was well furnished, and fitted with many invalid comforts. It stood half-way up the cliffs, and was consequently sheltered from rough land breezes. In addition, it commanded without interruption a view of a grand sweep of coast and the great rolling North Channel. The coast-guard station stood on a level with it, about a quarter of a mile away. A few fishermen's huts clustered on a lower level, at about five minutes' walking distance. These were the only habitations that Tretwick could boast on the coast-line. Above, on the cliffs, a landscape scarcely less desolate met the eye. The bastion of a ruined castle on a hill made a bold, sharp outline against the sky. Beneath it, in a hollow, stood an ancient church with ivy-covered tower, surrounded with a mossy, sunken churchyard. The few cottagers who attended service in this old-world sanctuary had their homes on the farther side of the castle-crowned hill, and their humble roof-trees were consequently hidden from view. In the foreground stretched an apparently illimitable heath in its full glory of purple heather and golden gorse, but with never so much as a stunted Scotch fir to break its picturesque monotony.

Joyce, as she and Mab posted their last few miles across country into the heart of this solitude, said to herself that, if they had searched England from corner to corner, they could not have found a better hiding-place.

It was burning August weather, and the vivid sunlight threw every feature of the landscape into bold relief.

Mab awakened to sudden animation at her first glimpse of the narrow beach, great brown rocks, and restless ocean flashing

into all sorts of brilliant, shifting tints in the effulgence of sunshine.

"It was something—something like this I saw in my—my dreams, Joyce," she cried enthusiastically. "I feel now we are nearer —" she broke off abruptly and ended with a sigh.

Joyce sighed too. She never heard Mab speak of her dreams without a thrill. Vistas in cloudland though they were, they seemed to suggest possibilities of a glimpse of hope now that all other possibilities were cut off.

But were they possibilities of which she dared take advantage? she asked herself, gazing sadly at Mab's pallid face, and thin, drooping figure.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DURING the two days that elapsed before Joyce and Mab took flight for the sea-side, Captain Buckingham did not molest them, either personally or by letter.

This line of conduct he had deliberately planned, his reasoning running somewhat as follows:

"This resolute young woman will be bound sooner or later to meet my views. She is not one, I take it, to stick at a trifle, and stand shilly-shallying, when word of hers can end a suspense which must be worse than any certainty. In a day or two there will come an imploring little note, begging a second interview. Well and good. She shall have her second interview, and I will undertake to say that it shall be a somewhat less stormy one than the first. By hurrying matters forward I may simply retard them; better let them alone to take their course. It's a bold game I'm playing, a desperately bold one; but when has audacity, joined to skill like mine, ever failed of a triumph?"

The motto of Danton, "*De l'audace, encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace*," aptly enough expressed the principle on which this man had governed his life.

Put a grain of sand under a microscope, you will see it clearly, not a doubt. At the same time you will be apt to look it out of its proportions, and exaggerate its importance in the scheme of the universe. Captain Buckingham had spent so many agreeable hours in the contemplation of his own prowess, that he had grown to overlook the fact that there were such weapons in the world as truth, honesty, and honour, by which it might be successfully combated.

He gave rein to his thoughts, and let

them career freely among the pleasant probabilities the future might have in store for him when once Mab became his wife.

The work of his Society had of late been pressing and important. A running fire of urgent orders was being received from head-quarters by every mail. Boycotting and moonlighter's work were being carried on briskly enough in Ireland, where Sylvia was proving herself a very efficient agent. But the impression seemed somehow to have arisen at the New York centre, that the work of the Society was beginning to flag in England. The ugly word dynamite had begun to be whispered from one to the other of the council, and the scheme for the destruction of certain public buildings in London—set on foot about a year previously, but abandoned out of deference to cooler heads and clearer judgments—was once more hinted at.

These whispers, of necessity, had reached Buckingham's ear before they resolved themselves into the form of a definite order.

He had shrugged his shoulders over them; had said to himself that he was getting older, and less inclined to risk his life and liberty than he had been in his old harum-scarum days.

"Now," he soliloquised, as he allowed his fancy to run riot in the benefits an alliance with Mab might confer upon him, "married to a rich wife, comfortably settled in New York or London, things would be altogether different. I should take higher standing at once, and they would let me off these risky ventures for the sake of the money and influence I should draft into the league."

It may be conjectured that this man had no intention of playing the part of Barnum towards Mab, although it had suited him well enough to fill this rôle towards Marie St. Clair. She, a poor, illiterate girl, could only have been of use to him as a professional clairvoyante. With Mab Shenstone the case was different. As a tractable, rich wife she would benefit him infinitely more than in any other guise. The clairvoyance, he had from the very first decided, could be useful, only in so far as it helped to form another and closer link. That securely forged, let the lighter and temporary bond be snapped at once.

Hand in hand with these thoughts came another not one whit less exultant, having in its substance more of the barbaric chieftain than of the nineteenth century republican. It painted the hour of

triumph when, on the day that made Mab his wife, he would turn to Joyce and say: "Here we are, brother and sister at last. Now, as a brother, let me give you a little piece of advice—'Forget that hot-headed lover of yours as quickly as possible. He met his death on what would have been his wedding-day.'" That would be a speech worth making. It would be triumph and revenge at one blow. It would pay back, with a fine touch, a score of petty slights, insults, innuendoes which these two had seen fit from time to time to launch at him. He could picture the girl's face as he said the words; the beautiful eyes uplifted, first in expectancy, then in agony, to his. He could fancy the cry of pain that would break from her lips as the full meaning of his words struck her brain. Why, it would be every whit as good as bringing in the young fool himself, and laying him down at her feet, with a dagger through his heart.

He admitted readily enough that the game was not without its risks—whenever was there a game worth playing that did not include risks? But the risks here were small, the triumph large. There would be certain small details that would require nice adjustment, such, for instance, as how to couple his certain knowledge of Frank's death with his perfect innocence in the matter.

Joyce was a vehement, passionate woman, he knew, but, after all, vehemence and passion would naturally become diluted when directed against a sister's husband, and that sister as much doted on as Mab was. And even supposing she were to carry matters so far as to set on foot a police inquiry, there was absolutely not one titlle of evidence to be brought against him.

So in a thoroughly contented frame of mind he reposed for nearly a week upon his resolve to take matters quietly, and not run the risk of spoiling the whole thing by rushing at it "like a bull at a gate."

As the days went on, however, and there came no sign whatsoever from Mab or Joyce, his resolve grew weaker. A slight feeling of uneasiness took possession of him. He began to think that it might be as well to change his tactics and take the initiative.

He accordingly penned a brief note to Mab, asking her to grant him an interview, and then, to make sure of its safe delivery, he decided to be his own messenger.

Captain Buckingham's quarters in Bloomsbury saw a good deal of Ned Donovan's

handsome Irish face just then. On the very day on which Buckingham penned his missive to Mab, he sat waiting in Buckingham's sitting-room, with despatches from New York in his breast-pocket.

Into this young Irishman's demeanour there had come of late a dogged sullenness and reserve which sat ill upon him. Buckingham, keeping a steady eye upon him, had noted it.

"He's doing good work, and work that no one else could be found to do just now," he thought; "but he's doing it at the sword's point. By-and-by there'll be a question or two he'll have to answer, and it'll go rough with him. But that won't be till we've got all the work we want out of him."

And forthwith he had sent Ned upon missions that were hourly becoming more distasteful to him, and had treated him with an arrogant brusqueness which at times set the Irishman's blood boiling.

Naturally the relation between the two men was somewhat strained. Fellowship in a cause is not omnipotent to swamp all minor enmities and discords in life.

The individual must wither before "the world," or in other words "the cause," can become "all in all." In this young Irishman the "individual" was very strong; in spite of disappointments, mortifications, and all sorts of hardships, it showed as yet no sign of withering.

"Why I love my life Heaven only knows," he would sometimes say to himself; "but not a doubt I do love it, and it won't be long before I claim my right to do what I please with it."

Possibly Captain Buckingham read these thoughts, or something akin to them, in the man's face as he entered the room. They added additional fuel to the discontent which had taken possession of him, when on arriving at Eaton Square he had been told that the Misses Shenstone had left town, and that all letters were to be forwarded to Mr. Archibald Shenstone at the Grand Hotel, Cheltenham, as they had not yet made up their minds as to their destination.

With a brief nod to Ned he held out his hand for his despatches, opened and read them in silence.

"There is nothing here to make me alter my present arrangements," he said when he had run his eye over them. "The work in County Down can be well carried through by an inferior officer. It will most likely devolve upon you."

Ned frowned a deep, ugly frown. "The rick-firing and cattle-staking business is not the work I'd choose to set going——" he began.

"Since when has it been the custom of the Society to ask its members what work they would or would not choose?" interrupted Buckingham curtly.

"Nor was it the work I was led to believe would be given me, when I joined the Society," Ned went on doggedly.

Captain Buckingham looked up at him, a curious expression passing over his face. "I suppose you know the penalty attached to insubordination?" he asked meaningly.

Yes, Ned knew well enough, none better, and silence fell on him at once.

"I shall have more to say to you by-and-by on this head," Buckingham went on; "meantime, you had better start for Cork at once. At the end of the week, full directions will be sent to you at your old quarters there. On second thoughts, it will be better for you to cross by way of Milford. You can branch off from Gloucester, and run down to Overbury. A day will be allowed you off duty to spend with your father and mother."

Ned's face brightened. Work in Ireland was rough and risky just then, it would be cheery to get a glimpse of the old couple in the gardener's cottage before he set about it. But what could have put such kindly forethought as this into the Captain's head? he asked himself.

He was soon to get his question answered.

"While at Overbury, I wish you to ascertain the Miss Shenstones' present address, and at once telegraph it to me here," Buckingham resumed. "Through your father and mother, no doubt you can easily get at it. If they fail to know it, go on to Cheltenham, and find it out through the servants at the hotel who post the old uncle's letters. You've done that sort of thing neatly enough before now."

Ned's face fell again, the dogged, sullen look came back to it. He bit his lip, answering not a word.

Of Captain Buckingham's attentions to Mab he had had hints from Kathleen, long before they had been so much as suspected by any member of the family. These hints had roused the wild beast in him, and had had, moreover, the practical effect of making him set on foot a few special enquiries concerning Buckingham's previous career. The result of these enquiries had not been

inspiring, and had contributed its quota to the distrust with which the man viewed his chief.

Captain Buckingham noted his silence and read it correctly. To himself he said: "That man must be brought to book before long, with a good strong hand too." Aloud he said, as he drew his chair to his writing-table and spread his papers before him: "These are all the instructions I have to give. When next you hear from me it will be at Cork. Good morning."

But Ned did not stir.

"I have a question to ask," he said, and Buckingham's quick ear once more detected the ring of rebellion in the man's tone. "Is this—this address you desire me to get for you, required for the work of the Society, or is it required for your own private use?"

Buckingham jumped up from his chair—the commanding officer to his very backbone. "Look here, my man," he said, setting his teeth over his words, "you've had one warning against insubordination, I take it you won't get a second. You've had your orders, they will not be repeated. I've no more to say." Then he went back to his writing-table.

Ned went silently down the stairs and out of the house. Outside, in the open air, he drew a long breath.

"It won't be for long—it can't be for long, now," he muttered, clenching his fingers into the palms of his hand. "Let me get breathing time, that's all, and I'll pay off my debts to the last farthing."

SOME NARROW ESCAPES.

IN THE LEBANON.

SHORTLY after the wholesale massacres of the Christians in Lebanon and Damascus, which took place in the autumn of 1860, the five great Powers of Europe insisted upon a new order of things being established throughout Syria; and obliged the Turkish Government to institute something like justice for the people who had been so foully treated by their Druse and Moslem fellow subjects.

The new Governor of Mount Lebanon was Daoud Pasha, the first Christian who ever had that rank conferred upon him; and amongst those who held office under him were several Christians, both from Constantinople and natives of Syria. The new government of the country in general, and more particularly of Mount Lebanon—

where the greatest and most wholesale massacres had taken place—was entirely organised by the five Special Commissioners sent out to Syria by the Powers mentioned above; and for several months nothing whatever was done in the way of establishing order in the land without their consent.

The representative of England on the occasion was Lord Dufferin, who is now Governor-General of India. Amongst other new organisations, it was settled that the police of Mount Lebanon should be taken entirely out of the hands of the Turks, and put under officers named by the Commissioners. At the time the massacres commenced, I had been some three years in Syria, and had acquired a knowledge of Arabic, which is the language of the country. When it was determined that an entirely new departure as to the police of the country should take place, I was offered, and accepted, the berth of Chief of the Force in Mount Lebanon, and was very soon hard at work organising the same, under the immediate orders of Daoud Pasha. These few lines of explanation are necessary, in order to show how it was that I became mixed up with certain events which will be mentioned in the course of what I am about to relate.

Some three months after I had taken charge of my new office, I was awoke one morning before daylight by a message from the Pasha, to the effect that he wanted to see me immediately. We were then living at the old Palace of the former Emir Beshis, called Beit-ed-Deen. That is to say, the Pasha occupied the Palace itself, and his subordinates lived in such houses as they had been able to secure in the immediate neighbourhood.

The cottage which I inhabited was situated on a hill some two hundred feet higher than any of the other houses. The view from it was magnificent. On the one side there was an unimpeded view of the most lofty ridges of Lebanon, and on the other, looking down the mountain towards the sea, the towns and harbours of Tyre and Sidon could be seen in the far-off distance. The road leading to the house was, however, anything but good. By daylight it was not a little difficult to get over it without stumbling and falling, and after dark it was almost impossible to do so. This it was that made me grumble when I was awoke at least an hour before daylight, and asked not to delay a moment in going to see His Excellency the Pasha.

Arrived at the Palace, I found my chief

in a state of great excitement. "I have just had news brought me," he said, "that a foul murder was committed a few hours ago, at a spot some ten miles from this. Now, I want you to take the matter up, and do your best to find out who the culprit or culprits are. It is the first crime of the kind that has been committed since I became Governor of the Mountain, now four months ago. If we can trace the murderer, lay hands on him, and bring him to justice, it will be a feather in my cap, and I need not say that you shall get due credit for the work. I leave the matter in your hands. Spare no trouble and no expense in finding out who the murderer is."

As a matter of course, I was not a little pleased with the task which His Excellency had set me. I knew by instinct, as it were, that I should have not a little difficulty in finding out who had committed the crime, and when I came to make enquiries my anticipations were fully realised. It turned out that the murdered man was a Greek * pedlar, who was known to carry about with him, what in those parts was looked upon as a considerable sum of money, besides several articles in jewellery, which he had for sale. His body was found in a stony plain, on the higher part of the Lebanon range, which was the road to more than one large hamlet. Within a radius of four or five miles of the spot there were as many villages, all inhabited exclusively by Druses. As a matter of course, I came to the conclusion that it was by the inhabitants of one or other of these villages that the murder had been committed. But any hope or chance of getting one Druse to inform on one of his co-religionists is out of the question—such a thing has never been known.

As I said before, the spot where the corpse of the murdered man was found, could not have been more than ten miles from Beit-ed-Deen. But a ten-mile ride on the Lebanon is a very different thing from getting over the same distance in any country in Europe. With the exception of one well-constructed bridle-path, which was made by the French army of occupation in 1861, and which goes from within a few miles of Beyrout right over the mountain, and of another broad carriage road, constructed by a French company, which owns the diligences which go from Beyrout to

Damascus, there is not even what can be called a pathway throughout the whole district. Those who have never been on the Lebanon are generally under the impression that it comprises one high mountain. But it is, in point of fact, a series, or range of mountains, some thirty miles long, and about seven or eight miles broad.

The ten miles I had to traverse before reaching the spot where the murdered man's corpse was lying, was, even for horses accustomed to the country, very difficult to get over. The greater part of the distance was over the bed of what, in the rainy season, would be a wide and deep mountain stream. That it takes considerable more time to get over the ground in such a country than it does in Europe, may be inferred from the fact, that we were upwards of four hours doing the ten miles.

And when we got to the spot, anything like a satisfactory enquiry as to the cause of the murder, seemed almost impossible. The corpse was lying, where it evidently had fallen, in the middle of a stony plain, some six or seven miles from the nearest village. The unfortunate man had evidently been murdered; and everything he had in the shape of money had been taken from him, as well as nearly all he carried in the pack that was on his back. It seemed to me at first that any enquiry about the case, or any endeavour to find out who the culprits were, could only result in disappointment. But, as I stood looking at the corpse, and trying to find out with what kind of weapon the man had been killed, a happy thought struck me. I suddenly remembered having heard that a French gentleman who owned a large establishment for reeling the silk off cocoons, had lately received from France a couple of very fine bloodhounds. It is true that the factory was some twenty miles from where we stood, and to go and return that distance would—taking into consideration the roads, or rather the want of roads, on Mount Lebanon—consume at the very least a couple of days, if not more. But it was the only chance I had of getting at the truth, and so I resolved to act upon the idea I had conceived.

In a very short time the note to the owner of the factory was written, and sent off by a horseman to its destination. In the meantime all that was left for those left behind, was to pass away the time as best they could until the answer arrived.

The party which accompanied me on this

* In Syria this word does not mean one who is a Greek by birth, but a member of the Greek Church, and a native of Lebanon or the surrounding country.

expedition, consisted of about thirty individuals. Of these one was a Hungarian officer, who held an appointment in the Police subordinate to myself; one was an Armenian clerk, who accompanied the party for the purpose of keeping a register, or diary, of all that took place; and the rest were all natives of Syria, who belonged to the mounted portion of the force of which I had charge, and held the position of non-commissioned officers and troopers of the police. Our sojourn at the place where we had halted did not promise, nor did it prove, to be a very cheerful one. Beyond one day's provision of bread, water, and corn for the horses, we had literally nothing whatever.

As I have said before, travelling in the stony, rocky paths of the mountain is invariably slow work. I had calculated upon the messenger I had sent for the bloodhounds taking about forty hours to go and return. But as it turned out, when he arrived at his destination, the master of the establishment and his two sons were both absent, and did not return until late in the evening, when both they and their horses were too tired to make a start for the place where we were waiting for them. The result was that forty-eight hours elapsed before I received an answer to my letter. What we should have done for the absolute necessities of life during the time we were waiting would be difficult to say, had it not been for some half-dozen Franciscan Monks who had a small monastery five or six miles from where we were bivouacked. I sent the Fathers a message, telling them why we were halted there, and how we were unable to provide food either for ourselves or our horses. The monks had not much for themselves, but what they had they brought us in the kindest possible manner, and not only supplied us with two or three good homely meals, but also with a few bottles of Lebanon wine, which, although it would hardly pass muster as a first-class wine, is by no means to be despised. By far the most disagreeable incident of our long halt was the corpse of the murdered man. If I had allowed it to be removed, the advantage which I hoped to gain by using the bloodhounds would have been altogether lost. But in a country like Mount Lebanon, where the heat by day is great, the odour from a dead body very soon becomes much stronger than it is pleasant; and to those who have to remain anywhere near it, is

anything but agreeable. Had we retired to any distance from the corpse the jackals and wolves would very soon have disposed of it after their own fashion, and we should have had no hopes of bringing matters to an issue.

The Turks have a proverb, or saying, in which they put great faith. It is to the effect that the man who knows how to wait, will end by governing the world. To a certain extent we experienced the practical truth of this. We waited, and in time we were rewarded by the arrival of the French gentleman who owned the silk factory. One of his sons accompanied him, and with them were two magnificent bloodhounds, by whose special qualifications we expected that much of our difficulties would be solved. Nor were we disappointed. The owner of these animals seemed to understand fully how to manage them. When, after some four or five hours of rest, they were ready to begin their work, the whole party were mounted and waiting to start. The dogs were taken to where the dead body was lying, and put on the scent here and there, round about the spot. Not less than half-a-dozen times they commenced following up some scent which they discovered on the ground, but in each instance stopped short after pursuing it a few yards. I began to despair of these animals being of any use to us, and was not a little vexed with myself for trusting in what seemed almost certain to prove a broken reed. Not so the owner of the bloodhounds.

"Depend upon it," he said, "that sooner or later they will hit off the scent, and show us in what direction the murderers have gone."

And so it proved. After several false casts, the dogs seemed to find a scent which they followed up at once for some two hundred or more yards.

"Now we have got it," said their owner, and he was right. In order not to let them go faster than we could follow, the hounds were held with a string. The scent seemed to get stronger and stronger. We must have gone over some six or seven miles of ground, and passed three or four Druse villages. But our canine guides never turned to the right or left. At last we halted for the night, and at daybreak the scent was taken up again. About noon our hunt after the unseen came to an end. The dogs led us to a very small Druse village, consisting of not more than a couple of dozen cottages, which lay altogether out of our road; and here they halted at the door of, perhaps,

the poorest-looking house in one of the most wretched collection of habitations it has ever been my lot to see in almost any country. The door was opened by a venerable-looking old man, whom, after smelling about him, the hounds tried to attack. They were called off, and we proceeded to search the old Druse's house, as well as his person. Much to our surprise nearly the whole of the goods—certainly everything that was of any value—were found in a very short time; and, what was of greater consequence, the clothes which the murderer must have worn at the time he committed the crime were also discovered, with fresh stains of human blood upon them.

It took our party two very long days to get back to Beit-ed-Deen, when, as I need hardly say, the Pasha was greatly pleased that our search had not been in vain. In due time the murderer was tried before what is called the "mixed medjis," being a Court of which the judges are composed of Druses, Christians, and Moslems. In a country where religious fanaticism is of far greater influence than justice, if a prisoner was tried for no matter how serious or how trivial a crime, he would be certain to be condemned, even if death were the penalty of his crime, provided his judges were of another creed than himself. On the other hand, if he was tried by men of the same religion as himself, they would be certain to pronounce him innocent, no matter how palpable his offence might have been. This is why, on Mount Lebanon and some other parts of the Turkish Empire, the judges—or they might be called judges and jurymen, for they perform both functions—invariably consist of men belonging to different creeds prevalent in the province or district. The prisoner we had captured by means of the bloodhounds was tried. Of his guilt there could be no doubt whatever. He was condemned to be hung; and in a very short time his sentence was known all over the mountain. Up to that time justice had been administered with a very slack hand all over the district; and, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the most palpable crimes had escaped with a very slight punishment. This was the first case of murder that had been brought home to the offender since Daoud Pasha had been appointed Governor of Lebanon, and the Druses felt that it would be a stigma upon their race if one of them was hung. Every possible influence was brought to bear upon the Pasha, to induce him to spare the

murderer's life; but he, very properly, determined that the sentence passed on the man should be carried out.

Some of the more influential Druses took the trouble of going to Beyrout—a very long day's journey, in order to beg the English Consul-General to interfere, and ask the Pasha to spare the man's life. But that official very properly declined to interfere. They then came to me, urging that as this was the first capture I had made of any one accused of a capital offence, I ought, if only for my own sake, and my official credit, to beg that the murderer's life should be spared. When other arguments failed, I was privately given to understand that if I did what was asked of me, a sum of money, equivalent to nearly a thousand pounds of English money, should be made over to me in such a manner that the fact of my having received it could never be proved. Last of all, the brother of the murderer appeared on the scene, and told me in very plain terms that if the culprit were hanged, I should pay the penalty of having captured him with my life; that, according to the custom and unwritten law of the mountains, the nearest surviving relative of any one is bound to avenge a death, and that it would be his business to kill me for having been the cause of his brother being hung. He said he was certain that if I interceded with His Excellency the Pasha, the man now in prison, and under sentence of death, would at any rate have his life spared. As a matter of course, I again refused to move in the matter. I had talked over the affair with Daoud Pasha, and fully agreed with him that it was absolutely necessary, for the peace of the district, that an example should be made, and that the sentence should be carried out. In due time this was done. One morning, just before daybreak, as is the custom of the country, the execution took place, and the body was left hanging on the rough gallows for a whole day, before it was made over to the relatives of the culprit in order that they might bury it. It was part of my duty to be present when the fatal knot was tied, and the man strung up to the cross-beam whence the rope hung.

In a former part of this paper I have mentioned that Daoud Pasha was a Christian. He belonged to what is called the Catholic Armenian Church, or that portion of the Armenian body, which maintain their own liturgy, and acknowledge the spiritual supremacy of the Pope. His Excellency had, at Beit-ed-Deen, his own chaplain,

who said mass in a small chapel which the Pasha had fitted up, about five hundred yards from the Palace. To this place of worship His Excellency proceeded every Sunday morning, about seven a.m., accompanied by all his staff, some twenty-five or thirty in number.

Those who were not of the same creed as the Pasha only accompanied him to the door of the chapel, and waited outside until the mass was over. But in going there not a little formality was observed. Everyone had his exact place, marked out in what might almost be called the procession, and was expected to keep it. It was my duty to walk a little in front of the Pasha, but a good deal to his left, so as to see that the different sentries we passed were prepared to salute in the proper manner, and to keep the road clear for anyone who wanted to present His Excellency with a petition, as many of the poor people invariably did on Sunday morning. We all walked at a very slow pace, so that there could be no difficulty for those who wished to address the Pasha, or to present any paper which they might want him to read.

We had arrived at the chapel, and were about to halt that the Pasha might pass in, when, all of a sudden, I heard my name called by at least a dozen voices, telling me in the most earnest manner to beware, to look out, to throw myself down, and I don't know what besides. The warnings were shouted out in accents of the utmost terror, such as may be heard in the street when anyone is in danger of being run over, and the words were shouted so loudly—in French, Italian, and Arabic—that I was for a moment fairly bewildered. At first I thought that the Pasha must be in danger from some cause or other, and I turned towards him. But such was not the case. On the contrary, His Excellency was evidently in a state of great excitement, and was also calling to me by name to take care, but of what I could not make out. There was evidently some great and immediate danger threatening me, but what it was I was utterly at a loss to understand. At last, turning in the direction in which everyone was pointing, I saw what I never have, and never shall, forget—what I now see as vividly and plainly as I did then, although twenty-five long years have elapsed since the affair happened.

Close to me, at a distance of not more than half a dozen yards, there was a broken wall, of which some four or five feet in height remained. Looking over this wall,

his eyes glaring with fury, was the brother of the man I had made a prisoner of, and who had been hanged chiefly by the testimony I had been able to give against him. What the fellow's intentions were, there could be no doubt whatever. He was aiming point-blank at me one of those short, bell-mouthed carbines, which are so common amongst the natives of Syria, and which, being always loaded with half a dozen or more slugs, each about the size of a large grape, are, at anything like close quarters, the most deadly weapons it is possible to imagine. I was so near the man that, when I had turned towards him, I seemed as it were to look into the barrel of his gun. Now, could there be any mistake as to what his intentions were? He seemed, as Orientals invariably are when they intend to commit any desperate crime, quite mad with rage, and kept calling out in Arabic: "Dog of an Englishman, dog of a Christian, you murdered my brother, and now I will kill you!"

Never in my life did I feel as I did during the one or two minutes that I faced this man, with his gun pointed at me, and within four or five feet of me. Knowing how these bell-mouthed firearms were always loaded, and that it was impossible that the fellow could miss me, I made up my mind that my time had come, and that in a few seconds more I must be murdered. To give an accurate account of what my feelings were is utterly impossible. My whole past life seemed to pass in review before me. I should have liked to fight against the fate that seemed so inevitable, but that was impossible. The whole thing had been so sudden, that I was utterly paralysed, and was incapable of forming any plan whatever.

The man continued his oaths and abuse, and I was so near him that I could see, as well as hear, when he put his weapon on full cock. I had then, so far as I could think of anything, made up my mind that there was nothing for it but to accept what seemed to be my inevitable fate. All this, it must be remembered, passed in the course of less than two minutes.

But a sound—a sound I can never forget—made itself heard. The fellow had drawn the trigger, and I could hear that the gun had missed fire. In an instant, after a tremendous oath, the man was hammering at his flint to make it do better; but he was too late. In a far shorter time than I take to write these lines, all my energies seemed to come back to me; I

had vaulted over the wall, and had the would-be murderer by the throat. We fell together, but I was uppermost; and although he tried his best to get his long knife out of the sheath, I was able to pummel his head against the stones until he was almost insensible. In another moment I had the help I needed; the fellow was bound with cords, and taken to prison. Thus ended by far the most narrow escape I have ever experienced.

I am fully aware that I have not told my tale in such a manner as will give my readers a vivid account of what I endured for the moment I saw the blunderbuss pointed at me, and within very few feet of my head. But it is difficult to depict one's feelings under such circumstances, more particularly when taken, as I was, without any warning whatever. My intending murderer followed the fate of his brother, and was hanged a few days after he tried to kill me.

FOUR IRISH FAIRY LEGENDS.

MR. TAGGART, a farmer in the townland of Roshine, had two servants, named Paddy Reilly, who, for the sake of distinguishing them, were called respectively Paddy-more, or Big Paddy, and Paddy-beg, or Little Paddy. Each man was so unfortunate as to have a hump on his back, which spoiled his beauty, and injured his chances with the girls of Roshine village. But, though alike in name and misfortune, the young men were unlike in temper, Paddy-more being cross-grained and ill-natured, while Paddy-beg was the cheeriest, most obliging of creatures.

One Hallowe'en, Paddy-beg washed his face, put on his Sunday clothes, and went out in search of a spree. As he sauntered along he observed a brilliant light across the fields somewhere about the place where the old Danish fort, a grassy mound, planted round the outer edge with trees, stood on his master's farm. He turned into the meadow where the cows had pastured in summer, and, drawing nearer the fort, the sound of lively music reached his ear. It seemed as if at least three fiddlers were playing the same tune. Paddy was fond of music, and he would have been a fine dancer of jigs and reels if it had not been for his hump; but he felt scruples about inviting a young girl to "take the floor" with him, "an un-signified, wee crathur," as he styled himself in his thoughts.

He drew nearer to the bright light, and saw a grand house with steps up to the hall door, while the music, at its loudest and merriest, seemed to ask him to walk in. A company of well-dressed people sat round a large room, drinking and smoking, and, watching a handsome couple dance a jig on a door taken off its hinges and laid in the middle of the floor. "Come in, Paddy-beg; come in, you good-natured, wee fellow," said the women, making room for him to sit down beside them.

He smilingly complied, wondering how they knew his name, for they seemed to be strangers in Roshine. He glanced from one to another. Very respectable, nice-looking people they were; but he had never seen them before. An old man offered him whiskey, and a woman spread soda-cake thickly with butter and handed it to him.

"Your butter's gude," remarked a crone in a red cloak.

"What wad it be but gude, an' it Mr. Taggart's butter?" was the reply. Paddy recollected that portions of butter had disappeared mysteriously of late, and that his master had suspected the cook of dishonesty. Who were these civil strangers? Where was he? But he had come out for a spree, and he resolved to enjoy himself. So he drank enough to make him merry, and, when his hosts proposed that he should dance, he started to his feet with alacrity, chose the prettiest girl in the company and led her to the floor. "That's a brave little dancer! More power, Paddy-beg, my wee fellow!" were the cries that greeted his flings and capers as he crossed his feet, shook his legs till they seemed strung on wire, jumped half his own height, and came down on the floor like a zephyr.

"Now we'll mak' him sing to us," said they, when the dancing was over. Paddy, nothing loth, sang songs and told stories and amused the party.

"What will we do for the civil wee fellow?" said one.

"Tak' the hump off him," returned several voices.

The morning light found him lying on the grass a couple of hundred yards from the old fort. There were the trees on the top of the mound, but where was the grand house? Vanished with the lights and the music.

All Roshine was surprised when Paddy appeared without his hump—a smart, straight little man, who might well be

"any girl's fancy." He had always been liked as much as Paddy-more was detested. It was this other cross-grained Paddy who grudged his comrade his good fortune, and expressed his envy in many spiteful ways.

Hallowe'en came round again, and Paddy-more, in hopes of a like adventure, made his way up the grazing field. There was what looked like a house with light streaming from its windows, and strains of gay music issuing forth from it. Paddy was received as cordially as his comrade had been, was given whiskey and other refreshments, and was invited to dance and sing. But his ill-temper soon peeped out. He flatly refused to dance; he would not sing; he could hardly answer civilly when he was spoken to.

"What will we do on him?" asked a voice.

"Stick Paddy-beg's hump on the top o' his ain," was responded unanimously.

When morning came he walked up Roshine Street with an enormous burden on his back; and, as long as he lived, his neighbours called him "Paddy wi' twa humps."

Mary Carland lived on the lonely shore of Glenveigh, where wooded hills crept down to the water's edge, and forests of Osmunda or royal fern growing six feet high, and patches of bog myrtle and fragrant wild thyme, formed the margin of the Lough. Not another human habitation was near. James Carland was gamekeeper to the landlord, who lived on his King's County estate, merely visiting Glenveigh in autumn, when he generally brought a party of gentlemen to shoot over his mountains. They put up at the shooting lodge at the head of the Lough, and Mary and James waited upon them, lighting their fires, cooking their food, and supplying them with necessaries.

This was the season of Mary's harvest. How pleasant to charge "the quality" a few pence more than market price for butter and eggs! How nice to charge the people of yonder village a commission on the chickens she managed to sell for them! And it was easy to confess to the priest, and get absolution. It will be seen that Mary's rectitude was not of an exalted character; but she was a dutiful wife, and no woman in the three kingdoms could have exceeded her in motherly love. She idolised Rhoda, her only child, a lovely creature of four years old; her thefts and peculations being laid by towards the child's fortune in a worsted stocking, that was hidden in a hole in the thatch of the cabin.

Rhoda trotted after her mother when she went up to the Lodge, and the sportsmen stroked her curly head; and one gentleman gave up a day's grouse-shooting in order to paint her picture.

This artist and sportsman was not the only person who admired Rhoda. Some beings, but seldom seen by mortals, also thought the child very beautiful. The grouse-shooting was over, and the quality gone, and the Carlands lived at Glenveigh with the golden eagles, who built in a cliff across the Lough, opposite their house, and the white trout, and the rabbits, and sea-gulls. There were other creatures nearer to them than they supposed; but James and Mary had never seen them, and were apt to speak of them slightly.

A sad change came over Rhoda. From being as wild and merry as the rabbits in the fern, she became as quiet as the old grey cat in the chimney corner, who was almost too lazy to catch a mouse. Her mother used to say, "Run outbye an' play yoursel', jewel."

"No, mammy," the child replied, unwilling to leave her stool, leaning her heavy head against the wall.

The poor child had a lump on her neck, which grew larger, while she lost her appetite, and became fretful and miserable. One evening the mother sat beside the fire with the crying child in her arms, and the tears fell fast upon the pale, little face. Steps were heard at the door, and a tiny old woman with a hooked nose, long black teeth, a grey beard, and a red cloak, came in. She was a frightful woman.

Mary felt a thrill of disgust at the sight of her; Rhoda's wail turned into a scream; the dog and cat sneaked off to the furthest end of the room, where they stood snarling and spitting.

"Be seated, good woman. Have you come far?" faltered Mary.

"Not far, ma'am. I'm a neighbour o' yourn. I live on Tullyannon Brae."

"Whisht, good woman, there's nae house ava on the Brae!"

"Troth is there, ma'am, just a brave house, an' I ha' lived comfortable in it for the last three hundred year. Many's the time your wee girl has played hersel' over my kitchen chimney, an' a bonnie wean she is—me an' my family noticed her a good deal—it was new for us to see sich a nice wean," and the hideous woman grinned so as to show her black fangs of teeth.

Mary now knew that her visitor must be one of the "gentry."

Tullyannon Brae was a hill about a quarter of a mile from the cabin—a wilderness of brambles, nut-trees, and ferns. Nothing could exceed Mary's anxiety to conciliate this strange guest. She produced her freshest butter and best soda-cake, and brewed tea that had cost four shillings the pound; calling her "your ladyship," and "my handsome woman."

"Your wean is sick. Will I gie you a cure?" asked her ladyship.

"A cure, lady? Ay, a cure! Be pleased to cure her," cried Mary, shaking less with terror than with eagerness.

"Weel, I'll mak' a bargain wi' you."

"What bargain, dear lady?"

"This ane. I'll come back this night four weeks an' gie' you three guesses to tell me my name, an' if you canna' tell it at the third guess, I'll tak' the child awa' wi' me to Tullyannon Brae."

"Oh, lady, the bargain's gey an' hard—gey an' hard!" cried the poor mother, shuddering.

"As you please," said the fairy, smoothing her cloak with claw-like fingers.

But as the child's wail grew louder, and her face seemed more pinched in the fire-light, Mary's resolution began to give way.

"I agree," she sobbed. "Cure my wean."

"Vera weel. Gie me a thread o' flax. Look. I bind it round the lump three times, an' bite off the ends."

Before the ends were bitten off the lump dwindled and disappeared. The child smiled, and dashing away her tears, jumped off her mother's knee, and ran to play with the grey cat.

"Good evening," said the visitor, moving to the door. "I'll be back in four weeks, an' if you canna' guess my name, thou handsome wean'll come wi' me."

Great was James's consternation when he heard the story.

"We know that the fairies live near us," said he, "but we dinna know their names."

The lovely Rhoda grew more engaging day by day, and her unhappy parents more miserable, and as the fateful hour approached they lost all hope.

At length their unwelcome visitor became due. They sat together with the child between them, listening for a footstep.

"There she comes!"

No! an old man crossed the threshold, and asked Mary if she would be so kind as to give him a night's lodging.

The poor woman complied, and while he was at supper the child climbed on his knee, begging for a story.

"Ay, my bonnie wean," said he, "I'll tell you about the ugly witch in the red cloak, who is spinning at her door on Tullyannon Brae an' singing

'Little knows the wife in yonder cot,
That my name is Trittemtrot.'

"Oh, sir, what is that you are singing to the wean?" asked Mary, startling.

"I was just telling your wee girl about the old hag that spins and sings. I saw her a wee minute ago by the light o' a fine fire she has on Tullyannon Brae."

"An' what was she singing? Oh! my darlin' gentleman, say it again."

The stranger obeyed.

"Little knows the wife in yonder cot,
That my name is Trittemtrot."

"Trittemtrot, Trittemtrot," repeated Mary, "she may come now when she likes."

While she spoke steps were heard, and the elfin woman appeared, striking the ground triumphantly with her crutch.

"Well, neighbour, the four weeks are up. Can you tell me my name?"

"Is it Nancy?" asked Mary, rubbing her brow as if puzzled.

"In troth it is not," with a malicious grin.

"Is it Bridget?"

"It is not; it is not. One more guess, an' then the bonnie wean comes awa' wi' me to Tullyannon Brae!"

"Is it Trittemtrot?"

"Who told you?" cried the elf in a rage. "Let me know, that I may tear him to pieces. I'll pinch him wi' the pains—I'll—I'll——"

The stranger went close to her, and whispered something in her ear, and she shrank as she caught what he said, till she was no bigger than the grey cat, and, uttering dismal cries, fled out of the house.

"Now your wean's safe, an' you know that ane's name, but you'll never know who I am," said their mysterious benefactor.

They loaded him with thanks and blessings, and he went away.

But, though Rhoda was safe, the family did not care to remain near Tullyannon Brae. They conveyed themselves across the ocean to the New World, far from elfin wiles and spells, for that the fairies have gained a footing there we have never heard.

Jack Donaghy was a cobbler who lived all alone in a cabin in a very "gentle" place, i.e. a place haunted by the fairies. His house was built on a whin-grown brae,

one small square of which had been stubbed out, and made into a potato garden by the people who had lived there before him. These people had thus incurred the enmity of the "gentry," and were unfortunate in every way, so unfortunate, that they were obliged to leave the spot. The house lay tenantless for a long time, and then Donaghy came to it. The first night as he sat at the fireside smoking, the latch was lifted, and a very small brown-coated man, with a red cap on, came in, and asked for a light for his pipe.

"To be sure—you're heartily welcome," said Donaghy, who was a cheerful, good-tempered creature. "Be seated, sir, an' tak' a glaze o' the fire."

The stranger, who was no bigger than a child of six, but with the wizened face of an ancient man, accepted the invitation, and they smoked for some time in silence.

"Will you listen to a wee advice from me, Donaghy?" then said the visitor in his shrill voice. "I see you're a civil creature, an' I'd like to speak a word for your good."

"Surely, sir, I'll listen."

"Weel-a-weel, you'll sweep up the hearth every night before you go to bed, an' put on a bonnie wee fire, an' if you leave a farrel o' oat-cake, an' a sup o' milk on the table, it'll be nae loss to you, I'm thinking."

So saying, and with a pleasant "good-night," the tiny man got up and went out, Donaghy venturing to ask whether he had far to travel that night.

"Only as far as the whinstane fornenst your door," was the reply.

Donaghy sat thinking for a good hour after his visitor had departed, and the result of his cogitations was that he made his fire, and left bread and milk on the table before going to bed. He could not sleep, and he soon heard the patter of feet on the clay floor, and the whispering of voices. He longed to look round, but was afraid of displeasing his visitors, so he lay quiet, with his face turned to the wall. He was rewarded for his prudence, for next morning he found a silver fourpence laid beside the empty porringer, and every morning regularly he was paid in the same manner for his hospitality. He had no reason to regret his neighbourhood to the fairy dwelling on Whinstane Brae.

The country lads and farm servants brought their boots to him to patch, and as they sat waiting, while he worked on winter nights, a hubbub was often heard

outside his window, many treble voices singing a curious sort of chant:

"Poor little Donaghy, aye in the thrang,
Aye at the whittle, an' aye at the whang."

"What's that, Donaghy? Who is singing outside your window?" cried the boys, full of curiosity.

"Whisht, boys, for ony sake, an' tak' nae notice," returned Donaghy, in a low tone. "They'll no harm yez, if you dinna harm them."

And a succession of young men grew accustomed to the chant.

Kate Maginnis was a sturdy servant girl, hard-working and respectable, but she never staid long in any service, and her mistress was invariably glad to see her take her departure, notwithstanding her usefulness. And the reason was that she was disliked by the fairies. The first evening she spent at Ruchan Farmhouse, master, mistress, and fellow-servants saw her spoon snatched from her on its way to her mouth, and flung to the farthest corner of the room, while she started and looked behind her.

"That beats all," said the farmer.

"What did that on you?" asked his wife.

"It's them we willna name," faltered the girl.

Another time Kate dropped a dish of smoking hot potatoes, which she was carrying to table, broke the dish, and hurt her foot.

"What made you do that, girl?" asked her mistress.

"It was them we willna name," she answered, almost crying, "and I never offended them to my knowledge."

"Maybe, then, it was your father or your grandfather that offended them, Kate, for the wee folk has long memories. It's the longest thing I mind when Paddy Begley, an' a gude livin' man he was, was walking on his grazing-ground, the Rappagh, not a mile frae this very house, that he met a small, low-set man coming towards him, an' he knowed he was ane o' them. He out wi' his knife, an' gave the dawning man a stab. Wi' that there was voices all round, calling out, 'Hit him again, Paddy Begley, hit him again.'"

"But Paddy knowed that one stab will kill a fairy, but a second will bring him to life again, so he didna gie the second stab, an' just left the dawning wee man lyin' dead on the Rappagh."

"Next morning the whole country was turned up, the corn-stooks scattered, the

flax tossed about, the ground dug over, an' therè was cryin' an' lamentin'. 'The King's son is dead!' that was what the voices was sayin' in the Rappagh, an' on this farm, an' all the way to Dungiven, from the back of every whinbush and dyke. I mind it as weel as if it was yesterday, an' maist pitiful it was."

"Master," said poor Kate, nursing her wounded foot, "I never heered thou story afore; but Paddy Begley was my mother's father."

"Faix an' troth, poor girl, that's the reason you shouldna be here," cried master and mistress together.

Next evening the whole family went to a party, leaving her alone in the house. She was busy scalding a churn, and the large pot of water she was using stood on the hearthstone near her. She heard a sudden splash, as if something had fallen into the water, and there was an outcry in a childish voice.

"Oh, I'm burnt; I'm burnt!" More splashing, and then other voices cried, "What ails you? Did she scald you?"

Kate trembled.

"Na, na," replied the first voice, "me, mysel', burnt my ainsel'."

"Weel-a-weel," returned the others, "if me mysel' burnt my ainsel', we canna help it, but if she had burnt you, we'd ha' burnt her to death."

This occurrence, related to the farmer and his wife on their return, frightened them yet more, and made them part with Kate for her own good the very next day.

IMPRESSIONS.

FROM our babehood upwards, we are making or taking impressions during every hour of our existence. A good many of them are foolish, a great many more of them are wrong; some are pathetic, and others ridiculous; but we take them all, and, unconsciously, the foolish and the bad, as well as the best and the most beautiful, affect every act and thought of our succeeding life. These impressions are as much our education as our school and college days. More so, for they are the lessons which fall directly from the lips of life, and even with the School Board in the land, it must be said that they are the best. Perhaps no man ever quite knows how swiftly, or to what an extent, he accepts impressions, or to what depth, they sink into his mind and heart. The analysis of one, with its condi-

tions of cause and effect, is generally too bewildering and complex, or too discomfiting to undertake.

We have received a general impression, that So-and-so is a remarkably clever man, who could see through a stone wall if he wished, and we admire him accordingly. But a kind friend, anxious to put our relations straight, tells us that So-and-so remarked that we were a fool, and straightway a new impression forms in our brain, which leaves us with the conclusion that So-and-so's intelligence is a poor thing after all.

There is a very powerful impression abroad, that rank, and handsome dwelling-places, and carriages, and horses are the dross, and the true heart the gold. It is a beautiful impression, and becomes part of our very life, in that it flavours the words of our mouth, and inspires the writings of our pen. But apparently, there is another impression which is also a conviction, for it carries us round hurriedly to call on a friend who has built himself an extra wing to his house, and makes us set out our best silver, and lay the finest damask on our table, when a friend comes to dine, drawn by his own horses; while we find our time so full of business and cares that it is impossible to pay that long-standing visit to the friend who, by force of circumstances, or the coyness of Fortune, has been compelled to retreat to a back street or a suburban and cramped residence. The impression in our mind that our friend at Peckham has a very worthy heart, is strong. But our friend in Grosvenor Square who has a title, has a worthy heart too. Probably these two combinations form a double impression on our brains; and, therefore, being still stronger, it is only fair that their effect on our conduct should be double too.

If a man walks off with our last new hat and leaves an old one in its place—if we overhear him remarking at one of our social entertainments that a fool and his money are soon parted—if we see him opening to a fellow-man his door, from which a few minutes before we have been sent away, it is no use enlarging to us any more upon the fact that he has been trusted with untold gold, or that he is a man with widely benevolent views. Our sensitively plastic being has received its own impression of him, and it influences our feelings to such an extent that we will neither trust him with our fortunes, nor leave him alone with our last new hat; or the next time

we go and call we hire a brougham, and put on our best clothes.

For if the fashionable or influential world should have left its impression upon our mind, as it probably has, that it is a good thing to be seen at his gates, we shall certainly act upon that impression by hastening to place ourselves there. For amongst all the others that stir and set into motion unregenerate humanity, there is one which is the mainspring of all, and that impression is that, to do well to self is the most laudable action in the world. As long as fire has power to burn us, or water to drown us, we shall always have a strong personal feeling for that mighty, erring creature designated self. But this impression is probably only a result of complex ones, and they vary still more as they affect us or are received by our fellows. We wait at the gates of this man with the impression that we are too great to be disturbed or moved by trifles of jealousy or vexation. We will think of his reputation, and forget the reality as it struck us. But the impression we may be making on our fellows is that of a toady and a snob. It is unfortunate. But perhaps it is neither here nor there after all. Nobody troubles much about the impression of the poor worm, when carrying out the probably carefully-inculcated maxims of the mother-worm, it made haste and went abroad early into the dew, except the early bird who found it there. And as the bird immediately and successfully seized its own opportunity, its impressions naturally would be the most lasting and important. And so great is the impression made on man's mind by success, that the early bird has been metaphorically stuffed and preserved in a proverb, to be quoted to our children as soon as they can walk, while but for its own compulsory and undesirable share in that transaction, the hapless worm would be completely forgotten. It is the greedy but successful early bird which points the moral. Perhaps if most of our impressions could take visible shape, our bodily eyes would open upon a kind of wild Walpurgis, so curious, so wild, so strangely assorted, so widely disproportioned they would seem. The child who has a suspicion that in a certain dark corner lurks a bogey, and carries the fancy with him even into the sunshine, where the roses are blooming as they never will bloom again, and where the daisies and pansies are only waiting for his baby hands to pick, and grows frightened even

out there in the summer sunshine, is but father to the man who bears with him in his brain, some dim impression gathered up years before. An impression which, perhaps in spite of himself, is stronger than truth, and justice, and training—stronger even than love, and friendship, and affection. The impression may be, that the measure of life is success—that all men are liars—that all women are frail—that pleasure is better than life—that revenge is due to a man's honour. The impression is there, and it gathers ground, and stretches like a long black shadow into the daylight and work of his every-day life. It darkens the sunshine, and it warps the work, and poisons the sweet waters of love, and eats like a canker through the bands of friendship. Happily for the world in general, and each of its denizens in particular, the impressions which sow seed, and bring forth the fair and wholesome fruit which nourishes all human life, are innumerable, for a man may no more live without mental or moral impressions than he can live without food, in that, seeing, hearing, thinking, and feeling, are the very essence of his being. The impressions that we gather at our mother's knee live with us and hallow our acts, which pass as outward signs of those first impressions, into the minds and souls of others. The impressions we gain from the lives of our heroes, from the faith of our friends, from the lips that we love, from the beauty of earth and sky and sea, from the strength and endurance of companions who are with us day by day, mingle with the breath of our life, and make us God-like when, but for them, we should be most frail, merciful when we would be cruel, and forgiving when we would fain avenge.

SEALSKIN, AND WHERE IT COMES FROM.

IN FOUR PARTS. PART III.

It has been already remarked that the fur seal does not assume parental duties till seven years old. This seems to be a long period of bachelor life. What does he do with himself all this time? Where does he live? Does he come to land or does he spend all his time at sea? This question is soon answered. The "holluschickies," for that is the local translation of "bachelor," do just as the others: they come up with the bulls and cows in the summer, amuse themselves in their own way, shed

their coats, and leave along with the rest. But they have no family responsibilities; and this fact produces a different condition of society.

We have already got some idea of the breeding-grounds; now for the "hauling"-grounds, the sealers' expressive term for the coast-line where the "holluschickies" haul up. These line the coast of St. Paul, but their tenants are not nearly so fastidious as their more mature relatives. Having no ties or duties they are not bound to a certain spot, but roam about as fancy dictates, covering much more ground and without any appearance of regularity. Usually the hauling-grounds are separate from the breeding-grounds; in some cases as much as two miles intervene, but this is not universally the rule. Not unfrequently the "holluschickies" find room at the breeding-grounds, but their station is always behind it, and, under such circumstances, there is always a broad path left through the rookery, by which the bachelors go up and down, and which is as well defined as one of our own roads. As long as they keep to this all goes smoothly; but if a masher so far forgets himself as to intrude, however slightly, on the harem of an authorised parent, woe be to him. He will be very lucky if he escapes being torn to pieces by the infuriated bull. As may be imagined then, the "holluschickies" preserve a grave and dignified demeanour while passing these enticing regions, and take very good care to keep themselves to themselves. Nowhere in the world, brute or civilised, is the rule of law better observed than here.

The "holluschickie" has no difficulty in getting through the day. Of all living creatures he is the most restless while awake, and sleep, though it comes very often, is not for long. He enjoys his life immensely; he and his brethren make excursions into the country, and take intense delight in crushing down and eating the coarse grass and umbelliferous plants which form the chief part of the vegetation. And when this attraction palls, there is always their natural home, the sea. Any day may be seen hundreds of thousands sporting at the edge of the surf, riding on the top of the roughest waves, just as they break, dipping below to reappear on the crest of the next behind. And when a little rock stands out of the boiling surf, there he and his friends have a grand time, each one trying to get to the top, only to be driven from it by the advancing water and the

pressure of his rivals, a fresh one immediately taking his place, only to be rolled over the next minute in the same way. And then, leaving the water's edge, there is the broad expanse of ocean. The "holluschickies" are the champion swimmers of the world; every fancy trick, turn and tumble ever dreamt of, are here displayed. The bulls and cows seldom indulge in these brilliant feats, their responsibilities render them grave and sedate; but the bachelors do nothing else. A favourite trick is to jump clean out of the water, like dolphins, describing a beautiful elliptical curve, three or four feet high, fore flipper close to the side, hind ones stretched out close together, plunging in head first, and then out again in a few seconds, and so on over, and over, and over again. In this they differ from their congeners; sea-lions and hair seals never jump like this. One very admirable trait in their character deserves notice, especially as they lose it and change for the worse later on—no quarrelling or bad temper is ever exhibited.

There is no difficulty in classing the "holluschickies" according to age, as yearlings, two, three, four, or five year olds. The yearlings come up in the last year's coat, already described, steel grey, both male and female. About the 15th to the 20th of August they begin to shed their coats, and this process takes some six weeks, and is finished by the end of September. It is done very gradually, so that no chill is received by the animal when in the water. During this period the whole coast-line is covered with the matted hair just shed. The yearling cows always retain the same colour; but the males of the same age turn to a nearly uniform dark grey and grey and black mixed. Next year, when two years old, and shedding for three years, it is a much darker grey, and so on to the third, fourth, and fifth season; then, afterwards, with age it gets more grey and brown with reddish ochre and whitish tipped over-hair on the shoulders. The moustache does not arrive at its greatest perfection till the seventh or eighth year.

Shy and wary as the seal is when out at sea, it is perfectly fearless when hauled up for its annual holiday. You may walk through the hauling-grounds without the slightest difficulty, or without creating a commotion in the herd. They simply open up before you twelve or twenty feet, close up behind, and take no further notice. It will therefore be easily understood that

half-a-dozen men would have no difficulty in turning aside from the herd two or three thousand of the lot, and driving them up to the village. And this is what is actually done to get the skins; there is no "hunting," "chasing," or "capturing."

No females are allowed to be killed on any account; the skin of the bull is of inferior quality, and therefore he is safe, but it is in greatest perfection at three years old; and, therefore, the "holluschickies" alone are devoted to slaughter. And this is how it is gone about.

Just at daybreak, in these latitudes about two a.m., the men charged with the duty get behind a certain number, and, by the aid of a little shouting and marrow-bone-and-cleaver music, detach them from the herd and drive them very quietly towards the killing-grounds at the village. In cool and moist weather and on hard ground, the seals may be driven safely half a mile an hour; at a quicker rate many drop exhausted and the fur suffers; the slower speed, therefore, is always preferred. Any old seals that may be in the drove do give in early, and are left to find their way back to the sea. The weaker of the young ones, when they fall out, get knocked on the head and skinned at once, if they are not too much heated. In course of time then the seals arrive at the killing-ground, where they are herded and allowed to cool down. This is finished by seven o'clock, and then all the able-bodied of the village turn out to work. Each man has a club five to six feet long and three inches thick at the furthest end, a stabbing-knife, a skinning-knife, and a whetstone. The chief gives the signal, and two or three hundred of the drove are taken out and formed into a "pod" or cluster, surrounded by a circle of natives, who narrow it down till the victims are well within reach. Then the word is given, and each man raising his club strikes on the head the seal nearest to him, and in a moment every one is stunned and motionless. The clubs are now dropped, the seals dragged out by the hind flippers, then each sealer takes his long knife and drives it between the fore flippers right into the heart, the blood gushes out, and life is extinct. Each seal is then drawn quickly out of the heap and all are laid close together, but without touching, and a second and third "pod" are treated precisely in the same way, and so on till the day's quota is complete. Then, if the day is a good killing one—that is, cold and damp—the skinning is proceeded

with, but if it is at all warm each "pod" is skinned immediately life is extinct. This is done to prevent what is known as "heating." This always occurs sooner or later, but very soon in warm weather. Under this influence the fur and hair come off in handfuls with the least touch, with the effect of course of rendering the skin valueless. This curious change will occur in less than half-an-hour, if the day be warm and dry, and the object, therefore, is to delay this as long as possible, and the only way to avoid is to kill outright and skin at once. This latter operation is performed with the ordinary butcher's knife, sharpened as keen as a razor. The body of the seal is placed on its back, the native then stoops over it, and with his long stabbing-knife makes a long swift cut directly down the middle of the belly, from the chin to the root of the tail. Then straddling over the carcase he makes with his shorter knife a circular cut round each fore and hind flipper, just where the fur ends, then seizing a flap on one side or other of the abdomen, he lifts it up and cuts the skin from the underlying blubber, rolling the carcase over in the way with which most people are familiar. The whole process takes less time to finish than to describe. A skilled hand will turn out a perfect skin in a minute and a half; the average, however, is four minutes. Nothing is left behind but a small patch, on which the moustache grows, the tip of the lower jaw, and the ridiculously abbreviated tail. The skin thus obtained is of an oval shape, with an oval hole near each side edge; these are where the fore flippers were. The carcase thus exposed is covered with a more or less thick—half an inch to an inch—layer of soft oily fat blubber, which conceals the muscles and flesh. It resembles that of all other seals, with this unfortunate difference, that it has a particularly offensive odour, unbearable to any cultivated organ, and actually worse than the smell from the carcases rotting all round. It is the one pervading scent of the island, and naturally comes in for the objugation of the new comer. Human nature, however, adapts itself to anything, even to this, and in time nobody notices it.

It has been already stated that seal meat forms the staple food of the natives, and one naturally wants to know what it is like. Well, it is much better than might be expected. When not more than three years old it is not at all fishy, as one would think, and is, in fact, as good as a good deal of the beef,

mutton, or pork, one gets at home. The following instructions, however, must be carefully observed. It must not have a particle of blubber left on it, however slight. Cut into thin slices and steep for six to twelve hours in salt and water, then fry or stew with a little bacon, season with pepper and salt, and serve up hot with the natural thick brown gravy, and the most fastidious eater will come again. The meat being naturally dry, always needs bacon. It may be mentioned here, for the benefit of the curious epicure, that sea lion flesh is better still, and hair seal best of all, as being much juicier. The liver of all three is excellent.

Having now actually got our skins, we can follow them comfortably. They are taken from the killing-grounds, examined thoroughly, and then piled up in the salting-house in bins, hair to fat, with plenty of salt on the flesh side. After three weeks of this treatment they are pickled enough, and are ready at any time to be taken out and rolled into bundles of twenty-five skins each, tightly corded, hair side out, for shipment. The average two year old skin weighs five and a half pounds; three years, seven pounds; and four years, twelve pounds. The great bulk are two and three year olds. In this state they are put on board the Company's steamer at St. Paul, and are shipped to San Francisco. Here they are transferred to large hogsheds of twenty to forty bundles, and are shipped to London, either via Panama, or else by rail to New York, and then to London in the usual way, London being, it seems, the great centre of the fur-selling and fur-preparing trade.

There is a popular notion that the seal-skin, as we see it at the furrier's, is just as it is taken off the animal. Nothing, however, could be more contrary to fact. Few skins are less attractive than this at first, as the fur is completely covered and hidden by the dull grey brown and grizzled over-hair. This mask has then to be removed, and this is an operation requiring a very great amount of patience and skill, with a consequent increase in price. The un-hairing is effected by warmth and moisture, which softens the roots of the over-hair, and enables it to be pulled out, or by shaving the inner side very thin, which cuts off the roots of the hair, which penetrate deeply, and leaves untouched those of the fur which are very superficial. Whichever method is employed the hair must be

taken off uniformly or the fur will never lie smoothly, but always have a rumpled look, which can never be corrected by any subsequent treatment. This will explain to some extent the cause of the high price of sealskin jackets and cloaks, and also the cause of the differing prices one hears of, as a good many skins are more or less spoiled in the dressing. Another cause, too, is the quality of the dye, and the workmanship employed in its use. The liquid colour is put on with a brush, and the points of the standing fur carefully covered, the skin is then rolled up fur inside, and then, after a little time, hung up and dried. The dry dye is then removed, and a further coat applied, dried, removed, and so on till the requisite shade is obtained. One or two of these coats are laid on thick and pressed down to the roots of the fur, making what is called the ground. From eight to twelve coats are needed to produce a good colour. No wonder a first-class sealskin is expensive: it is just as true now as ever it was; but in these days of universal cheapness one is apt to forget that, if you want a really good thing, you must pay a good price.

Thus ends the history of the sealskin. As far as can be seen at present there is not the slightest fear that this fur will become either scarcer or more plentiful, consolatory at any rate for the happy possessor of the article.

Till 1890 the annual catch of the Pribylows is strictly limited to one hundred thousand, and, as far as I can judge, the world takes off regularly the quantity provided. Whether, after 1890 it will be deemed advisable, either commercially or scientifically, to allow an increase of the catch, it is impossible to say. But one thing seems tolerably certain, that this take can be supported to the end of time, supposing the present conditions of climate are continued.

The natives remember that the winter of 1835-6 was a particularly hard one; the ice came down thicker and stronger than had ever been known before, and in much greater masses, and surrounded the island with a dense wall—twenty or thirty feet above the surf—completely blockading the land. This did not disappear till the end of August, and consequently when the seals came as usual they were unable to land, and were of necessity obliged to bring forth at sea, where of course the young at once perished. Seal life was thus almost annihilated, and

years elapsed before it recovered from the shock.

Against such an occurrence as this we cannot be protected; but, short of this, there is nothing to be feared but some mysterious epidemic, such as is known to have ravaged the hair seals of the North Atlantic, but which, as far as is known, has never appeared in the North Pacific. We may, therefore, reasonably suppose that the supply of sealskin will remain a constant quantity, and be unaffected in price, except that this may possibly be enhanced by the increase of wealth and luxury amongst ourselves and the world generally. On the whole, then, ladies' minds may rest undisturbed.

Knowing, as we do, that the hair seal is taken solely for its oil, we should expect that that from the fur seal would be an article of trade. This is very natural, but there are difficulties. In the first place, there is the objectionable smell, which up to now cannot be removed by any known process that will pay. Secondly, it is thick and gummy, and far darker than any other seal oil, thus presenting a marked contrast to the clear, limpid, and bright colour of the oil of the hair seal. Thirdly, there is the time, trouble, and danger expended in handling bulky casks at a place where a vessel has to be loaded one and a half to three miles from a shore always subject to daily heavy surf and frequent gales; then add cost of casks and cooerage, men's wages rendering and loading, tax of fifty-five cents per gallon, transport to market, refining and putting on the market with a very slow sale at any price, and it is not to be wondered at that the article has no commercial value.

Then there are the bones, which would surely fetch something in these days when the world is ransacked for material for fertilising exhausted soils. Here, again, there are difficulties. The bones of the seal are more like pasteboard than the bone we are accustomed to, and are singularly light and porous, resembling those of birds rather than mammals. When dried, the skeleton of a three year old only weighs seven pounds, and that would be much reduced if kiln-dried, as bones usually are. It is very doubtful if they would pay, after debiting them with freight and charges; consequently St. Paul, in certain places, is covered with bones and rotting carcasses. No attempt is made to remove them from the spot where the animal was skinned. Next year the killing-ground is moved a

little on one side, and in three years every sign of slaughter has disappeared, and the ground is ready for another batch of victims. Thus, a relatively small area suffices for the annual operation.

One would naturally expect that the presence of this immense mass of decomposing animal matter would produce an epidemic that would carry off every one of the inhabitants. But it is not so—the cold, raw temperature and the strong winds seem to prevent any evil effects from the fermentation of decay. The natives are no more sickly than any other semi-civilised people. They have the ordinary diseases, which all flesh is heir to, and are strongly prejudiced in favour of the regular wise woman, not unknown to more advanced societies, considering the provision of a properly-qualified practitioner by the Company as a direct vote of censure on their knowledge of medicine. After all the doctor gets little practice; he is never called in till all the charms and spells have been exhausted, and then, as a rule, it is too late.

LOST IN THE VALLEY.

By the Author of "Driven of the Wind," etc.

A STORY IN SIXTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE attitude of silent, watchful pity, assumed by all the family circle towards Maurice, irritated him profoundly.

Miss Dudley, too, was, as before, a constant visitor. Maurice was always meeting her light grey eyes fixed upon him with a look of compassionate interest. For she had heard his story, and now regarded him in the light of a hero of romance, an idea which she disseminated freely among the neighbouring families, until Maurice was compelled to shun them all, lest he should be sympathised with against his will.

He spent most of his time quietly reading, or pretending to read, before the fire in his study. He had never been particularly talkative, and had always been subdued and gentle in manner; but the flashes of humour which had before enlivened his conversation were absent now. He hardly ever made any remark at all, and by the time the summer returned, six months later, he had lost all the beautiful boyish look that had formerly given such charm to his face. His notion of happiness appeared to be to spend all his money on

otto of roses, which he sprinkled profusely about his room, and then to sing over old snatches of melodies by the piano in the twilight, with the white cat purring against his feet.

Again and again, in his own mind, all day and all night, he lived through the short period he had passed with Eveline, pondering over all she had told him of her life, and comparing it with what he knew of her character, until his imaginings grew to be more real to him than what was actually happening around him.

In August, when all the family left for the seaside, he begged to be allowed to remain at home alone a little while, and to join them later; and, as they humoured him in everything, he was allowed to have his way in this.

In spite of their kindness, it was with a feeling of relief that he watched them all drive away from The Grange door, as he stood on the steps, waving his hand to them in the sunshine.

"Poor boy, how horribly thin and ill he looks!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilde. "I really think we ought not to have let him stay there all alone."

"Poor little chap, that foreign Countess was nearly the death of him," said Maurice's father.

"He'd get over it in half the time if he'd only talk about it," commented Mary.

Half an hour after their carriage had driven through the lodge gates, the postman entered them, bearing a letter for Maurice Wilde. It had been travelling some days, and was redirected from certain other Granges in neighbouring counties. Maurice was wandering all over the house, as one does when left in sole possession of any dwelling, when the servant came to him to ask if the letter was for him.

"It's been travelling a good deal, sir, and your name isn't spelt rightly," the girl said. "The postmark is Paris."

For a moment Maurice's heart seemed to stand still.

Had she written to him at last?

But the handwriting was strange to him, an angular feminine hand, rather difficult to make out. Taking the letter to read quietly in his study he opened it, and saw that the signature was "Ellen McIntyre."

The letter was worded in the formal, old-fashioned style, which the little lady's person and manner suggested.

"I must ask you to pardon me," it began, "the liberty I take in thus addressing you,

but I am so sure that you are labouring under a misapprehension concerning a very dear friend of mine, that I have endeavoured for some months past to procure your address. You will probably guess that I refer to Eveline Douglas. I have only seen her once since she left Paris hurriedly last November with Dr. Grantley, to stay with his mother at Boulogne."

Maurice put down the letter.

It was Dr. Grantley then, with whom she had left Paris, and not, as Pierre had informed him, M. de Villars.

What a fool he had been to believe the word of that sly-faced rogue who, as he himself had seen, was in the Marquis's pay!

But the supper-party, and de Villars's return to Paris as he, Maurice, had left the city—could Miss McIntyre explain that too?

He took up the letter, and read on eagerly.

"She was travelling with Mrs. Grantley in the South of France last spring, and invited me to spend a fortnight with her; and I was most distressed to notice the alteration for the worse in her health and spirits. If not happy, she was at least resigned and cheerful when you first met her. Now she seems altogether hopeless, crushed under the weight of the cruel suspicions cherished against her by those whom she loved and trusted. She would not mention your name at first, but before I left she briefly related to me the events which induced her to quit Paris.

"You must pardon me for saying so, but I think your conduct altogether unjustifiable. Eveline had fully explained everything to you, and you had stated your belief in her words; then, when Pierre, who has since been taken into M. de Villars's service, informed him of your arrival, and he sent you a cruel and calumnious letter against the woman who had repulsed him, you declined to listen to her explanation, and left her with words that wounded her, even more than you could have wished—as if, indeed, she had not suffered enough already through the selfishness and wickedness of men. I myself was with Eveline, when, in despair lest your life should be risked through any fault of hers, she went to de Villars's house, to beg him to withdraw his challenge. I heard him offer to forego his revenge if she would encourage his love; I heard her scornful refusal. And then I heard him make the mean condition that,

unless she entered the supper-room with him, and listened while he spoke to her before his friends, he would meet you, and, if possible, kill you the next morning. I saw her hesitate, saw the struggle between her pride and her affection, and saw her at last, for your sake, consent. And I crept to the half-open door of the room she entered, and saw her sitting there among them, but not of them, with a look of cold suffering on her face that chilled the boldest of the disreputable company. Then, when her short ordeal was over, I accompanied her home, where you were waiting for her—you, for whom she had undergone such a truly humiliating scene, and who, later, rewarded her unselfish affection by coldness and desertion.

"Very possibly you may by this time be married in England, and may have forgotten Eveline Douglas and your professed affection for her; I hear that she herself will shortly be married to a man who has known and loved her for years; but I feel it would be injustice to the noblest woman I have ever met, if I did not strive to clear her from the groundless accusations laid to her charge. Pray do not imagine that Eveline is in any way responsible for this letter; she would be very angry with me if she knew that I had written it. She thinks of you as of a once dear friend now dead, and before the end of the year, I trust, will have become the wife of Dr. Grantley.

"Yours faithfully,

"ELLEN MCINTYRE."

"The wife of Dr. Grantley." This one sentence impressed Maurice more than anything else in the letter. To find that she was innocent and pure, as he had always thought, seemed to him now no new thing. He had never been able to realise her wickedness, and always inclined to think the whole de Villars episode a miserable puzzle, to which he should some day find the key. But that he should be unable to go to her, that she should think of him as of one dead, and be on the eve of marrying another man, when for months past he had been living only on the memory of the time they had spent together, wounded him acutely.

He could not even write to her—from what he could understand she had not been in Paris since he had left it the year before, and he had no idea where she was. Besides, he had voluntarily resigned all claim upon her, all interest in her; and he knew that, despite

her gentleness, she was very proud. She had known him only a few weeks, Dr. Grantley for many years, and when he left her and refused to listen to her explanations, she must have sent immediately for her old friend.

Something at least Maurice felt he could do—he could make her good name clear to his own family, who had all been induced to regard her as a modern Messalina. Before joining them, however, he made a pilgrimage up to Somerset House, and had the satisfaction of reading a copy of James Douglas's will, by which the whole of his large fortune was left to his step-daughter, Eveline, Countess of Montecalvo.

"We have all of us made a cruel mistake about Eveline Douglas," Maurice wrote to his father. "I don't suppose I shall ever be able to clear her name to that unhappy, prejudiced old Madame Ravelli, but when the younger one comes back to England, I mean to explain things to her at least. Don't go and frighten yourself, thinking I am going to marry Eveline. I shall, in all probability, never see and never hear from her again. But I have had a letter from a lady who knows her intimately, and who shows me what a blind fool I was ever to believe anything against her. The money on which old Madame Ravelli is living now is supplied, not by her relatives, but by Eveline; and I have seen in London a copy of her step-father's will, proving clearing the falsity of Madame Ravelli's statements as to the source of her wealth. Her husband was an infamous scoundrel, and her fault was too great obedience to him—that is all. The story is too long to tell you now; but you shall hear it all when I join you, as I hope to do in two days' time. As for myself I have missed the one thing in life to make me happy, and it is my own fault. Eveline Douglas is going to marry a man who knew her during her whole married life, and who loves and sympathises with her as she deserves."

Old Mr. Wilde discussed this letter with his wife and family. They were all somewhat relieved that they were not asked to welcome this mysterious Countess of doubtful antecedents into their midst, and heartily glad to hear that someone else was going to marry her.

And when, a few days later, Maurice joined them, and insisted on relating to them Eveline's whole story as she had related it to him, they listened with interest and sympathy.

He announced, too, his determination of going up to London, and seeing whether it was yet too late to procure the Government appointment which had been offered to him in the spring, a resolution which all his family circle welcomed with applause.

"For of course he won't forget her if he goes mooning about all day, doing nothing," Mr. Wilde said to his wife.

In truth his son was feeling strongly the want of active employment that he might not be continually haunted with self-reproachful thoughts, and with pictures of the happiness that might have been his, had he been only a little more trustful, a little more patient.

By the first days of September, when his family returned to The Grange, Maurice had energetically sought for, and succeeded in obtaining, an appointment in town, with easy hours, fair pay, and little to do, through the influence of some friends of his father.

His employment made it necessary to live in London, but he generally spent Sunday at The Grange, looking thinner and older at each successive visit.

For he was so determined to forget his brief love-story, that he went everywhere, accepting every invitation he received, and, as he was young, good-looking, a good dancer, and well-connected, he soon found half-an-hour's solitude in the dull West-End street where his rooms were situated, a rarity indeed.

But the constant feverish excitement which his many engagements, and the very air of London life brought to him tired him terribly. Society gave him amusements, distractions, acquaintances; but it could not satisfy the craving of his heart for the love of the only woman he had ever really cared for.

Night after night, as, returning tired from a dance, a concert, a supper, or a visit to the theatre, he put his candle out and tried to sleep, he found himself mentally comparing Eveline Douglas to the women he had met, and deciding how very far she eclipsed them all; then, lying wearily awake, he wondered where she was, whether she had indeed married Dr. Grantley, and whether she had really altogether forgotten him.

When little Jeanne returned to England in December as the wife of Jack Dudley, Maurice insisted on relating all he knew concerning Eveline to her too, and

found it not difficult to alter the little Frenchwoman's ideas on the subject entirely, and bring her to think of her former rival in a tearfully sympathetic and affectionate spirit.

It was during the rejoicings at Dudley Manor over the return of the bride and bridegroom, that Maurice's relations suddenly discovered that he was seriously ill—so ill that he had to be excused from his office—and the fortnight before Christmas found him lying white and nerveless on a sofa at The Grange, physically incapable of the slightest exertion. The local doctors said it was low fever; the London doctors pronounced it a nervous illness, brought on by worry. They all recommended rest and tonics. Maurice took both, and grew no better, but rather worse day by day, until his blue eyes began to shine from his thin white face with a startling brilliancy that brought a choking sensation to his father's throat, reminding him, as it did, of his son's fragile little mother, whose eyes had shone just in the same manner when she was dying.

As an invalid Maurice was most docile and submissive: the whole household was always on the alert to satisfy his slightest wish; but he never expressed any, and seemed content to lie in silence, with his eyes closed, all day long.

At last, about a week before Christmas, as he was alone with his father, a light came suddenly into his face.

"Dad," he exclaimed, "these doctors will never do one the slightest good. But I know a man who would. Will you telegraph for him?"

"Of course, my boy," said his father, finding a pencil and a telegraph form at once. "What shall I write?"

"From Maurice Wilde, The Grange, Millthorpe, Warwickshire, to Dr. Grantley, 10, Rue Tronchet, Paris. Can you come at once and see me professionally? I think I am dying. Dictated. Maurice."

His father put down the pencil.

"Dying, my boy! Nonsense! Dr. Sydney says you're a little weak, and want change of air, and this bitter weather tries you, of course, as is does everyone."

"Well, even if it isn't true," said Maurice's soft voice, "it will bring him all the quicker, won't it?"

So the telegram was sent, and the evening of the following day saw Dr. Grantley's arrival at The Grange.